

## Children's and Adolescents' Mental Health

Mental health is how we think, feel, and act. It includes how we handle stress, relate to others, and make decisions. Mental health problems in young people can lead to school failure, family conflicts, drug abuse, violence or suicide. These problems can also be very costly to families and communities.

At any given time, at least one in five children and adolescents may have a mental health problem, while 1 in 20--as many as 3 million young people--may have a serious emotional disturbance. Between 117,734 and 196,224 Arizona children have a mental disorder, but less than 20% receive any mental health service.

Factors that put young people at risk of mental health problems include chemical imbalances in the body, and central nervous system damage, such as a head injury. Exposure to violence, stress related to poverty and discrimination, being the victim of physical or sexual abuse, and loss of important people through death or broken relationships also may contribute.

### Warning Signs

Pay attention if a young person you know:

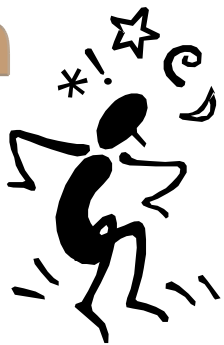
Feels:

- really sad and hopeless and the feelings don't go away;
- very angry, worthless or guilty most of the time;
- extremely fearful, anxious or worried a lot more than other young people;
- constantly concerned about physical problems or physical appearance;
- worry about being harmed, hurting others, or about doing something "bad";
- frightened that his or her mind is controlled or is out of control.

Experiences big changes, such as:

- does much worse in school;
- loses interest in things usually enjoyed;
- has unexplained changes in sleeping or eating;
- avoids friends or family and wants to be alone all the time;
- poor concentration--can't think straight, focus attention or make decisions;
- feels life is too hard to handle or considers suicide;
- hears voices that cannot be explained.

Produced by:



Behaves in ways that cause problems, for example:

- uses alcohol or other drugs;
- eats large amounts of food and then makes self vomit, abuses laxatives, or takes enemas to avoid weight gain;
- diets or exercises obsessively although bone-thin;
- need to repeatedly perform certain routines to avoid danger;
- constantly violates the rights of others or breaks the law;
- does things that can be life threatening.



Is My Teen In Crisis?



# Is My Teen In Crisis?



## Many Young People Still Need Help

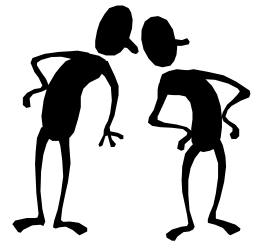
If there is concern about a child's or adolescent's mental health, it is important to get help as soon as possible. An estimated two-thirds of all young people with mental health problems not getting help! Most often, young people's mental health problems are not recognized --and appropriate help is not sought. The stigma about mental health problems also keeps many people from asking for help.

But mental health problems can be recognized and treated. Depending on the problem a young person has, the range of services helping him or her may include case management; in-patient psychiatric care; counseling, including intensive family-based counseling in the home; residential treatment; day treatment; special education services; independent living supports; family support and respite care; legal services, protection and advocacy; and self-help or support groups.

## Finding the Right Services

To find the right services for their children, families can:

- get accurate information from hotlines, libraries, or other sources;
- seek referrals from professionals;
- ask questions about treatments and services;
- talk to other families in their communities; and
- find family network organizations.



For further information or help, call:

- **Community Information and Referral: (602) 263-8856 or 1-800-352-3792**
- **Mental Health Association: (602) 994-4407 or 1-800-642-9277**
- **MIKID (Mentally Ill Kids In Distress): (602) 253-1240**
- **Raising Special Kids: (602) 242-4366**
- **Arizona Alliance for the Mentally Ill: (602) 244-8166**